

St James Episcopal Church
208 North 4th Street
Baton Rouge
East Baton Rouge Parish
Louisiana

HABS No. LA-1136

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LA,
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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY HABS No. LA-1136

ST. JAMES EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Location: 208 North 4th Street, northeast corner of
Convention Street, Baton Rouge, East Baton Rouge
Parish, Louisiana.

Present Owner/
Occupant: St. James Episcopal Church.

Present Use: Church.

Significance: The Congregation of St. James Church was
incorporated in 1844 and for nearly one
hundred years was the only Episcopal Church
in Baton Rouge. The present church building
was consecrated in 1895 and represents a good
example of ecclesiastical Gothic Revival
architecture.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: In 1889, construction started on the church, which was consecrated in 1895.
2. Architect: Colonel W. K. Stevens.
3. Original and subsequent owners: On September 1, 1854, the Rector, church wardens and vestrymen of the Church of St. James acquired lot 5 of square 4 from Philip Hickey at a sheriff's sale for \$800 (Conveyance Book, O, Folio 70-71).
4. Contractor: W. H. Miller.
5. Original plans and construction: The church has not been substantially altered since its construction.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

On March 25, 1844, the congregation received its charter from the state of Louisiana. The cornerstone for the earlier frame building was laid on June 26, 1845. It was consecrated May 23, 1847, and replaced by the extant brick church.

ST. JAMES EPISCOPAL CHURCH
HABS No. LA-1136 (Page 2)

Mrs. Zachary Taylor, wife of the twelfth President of the United States, was a founder. For nearly one hundred years, St. James was the only Episcopal church in Baton Rouge.

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

"Centennial at St. James Church," Baton Rouge Public Library, Vertical Files.

Conveyance Records, East Baton Rouge Parish Centroplex.

Holden, Tom. "St. James Episcopal Church: A Stained Glass Study." Louisiana State University, term paper, no date.

National Register of Historic Places, nomination form, listed May 5, 1978.

St. James Directory, 1978.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Heck, Robert W. Historical Survey. City of Baton Rouge and Parish of East Baton Rouge Community Renewal Program, March, 1970.

State Times, May 20, 1944.

Prepared by Sibyl McCormac Groff
Project Supervisor
Historic American
Buildings Survey
Summer, 1978

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: St. James Church, one of two extant Gothic Revival churches in Baton Rouge, features fine brick work and truss construction.

ST. JAMES EPISCOPAL CHURCH
HABS No. LA-1136 (Page 3)

2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The cruciform plan with aisled nave has an area of 5,913 square feet.
2. Foundations: Corbeled brick piers.
3. Wall construction, finish, and color: Brick. The exterior walls are 1'-7" thick laid in common bond with five rows of stretchers to one row of headers. The brick was cleaned and repointed in 1972.
4. Structural system: Brick with buttresses.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Five slate steps lead to the main (west) entrance. Additional doors on the north and south open into the narthex and bell tower, respectively. The double wooden doors (south and west) are set in brick ogee arches topped by a Celtic cross. Surrounding the ogee arches are six rampant arches, three on each side. The north door is contained in a simple brick pointed arch. On the east side there are two doors leading from either side of the chancel.
 - b. Windows: The principal entrance is flanked by lancet windows with hoodmolds. Just behind, in the gabled end of the nave roof, there is a double lancet window supporting a small round window. The north and south nave elevations each have three stained glass lancet windows between the buttresses. The north and south ends of the transept have three-part, interlaced lancet stained glass windows with hoodmolds, which are crowned by finials and rose windows. The chancel has two lancet stained glass windows on the north, but the same openings on the south have been bricked up. The semi-octagonal chancel has three stained glass windows in lancet arches with hoodmolds.

The square bell tower, at the southwest corner of the church, has several windows. At the bottom

ST. JAMES EPISCOPAL CHURCH
HABS No. LA-1136 (Page 4)

level there are three stained-glass lancet windows with hoodmolds. Proceeding up the tower there is a round window a hoodmold, several rows of corbeled brick, three oblong brick recesses with hoodmolds, and a double interlaced lancet arch with louvers in the belfry.

6. Roof: The steeply pitched roofs on the nave and transept are slate with tile ridge caps. The nave roof has a gabled end to the west. To the east, the chancel ends in a semicircular configuration. The roof of the transept ends in gables facing north and south.

C. Description of the Interior:

1. Floor plans: The church is cruciform in plan with a narthex, nave, transept, and chancel. On the southeast side of the transept is a pointed arch containing the pipes of the organ. On the northeast side a door with a pointed arch leads into the service room. In front of the altar, doors with pointed arches lead into a hall on the right and into the service room on the left.
2. Flooring: Carpeting.
3. Wall and ceiling finish: Throughout the church there is 3'-6" cypress wainscoting with pointed arch motifs. The plaster and lath walls are painted white. The ceiling reveals the arched truss construction, with the largest truss spanning 35 feet. The supporting brackets are chamfered and tied by black iron nuts and bolts. The surface of the ceiling is covered with cypress boards.
4. Doorways and doors: There are three doors leading from the narthex to the nave; one door on the northeast side of the transept; and two flanking the altar. All of the doors have pointed arches and recessed panels.
5. Decorative features: Surrounding the apse behind the altar there are thirty-six hand-carved panels in different designs including lilies, vines, and geometrics. The Reverend J. L. Tucker, Rector of the church, carved these cypress panels between 1899 and 1906, his son completing three of them after his death. The panels are installed in trefoil arches separated by fluted pilasters.

ST. JAMES EPISCOPAL CHURCH
HABS No. LA-1136 (Page 5)

Above these panels are three stained glass windows set in pointed arches. They are reputed to be L. C. Tiffany windows, but there is no documentatin to verify this. They date from 1910. The other stained glass windows in the sanctuary were installed after World War II and were crafted by Jacoby of St. Louis, Missouri. These windows depict the Nativity, the Entrance into Jerusalem, and other scenes from the life of Christ.

The four choir stalls on each side of the altar have applied foliated decoration and Greek crosses. The nave has nineteen rows of pews on each side of the main aisle, and ten more rows flanking the side aisles. On the sides of the pews there are applied pointed arches.

6. Hardware: The brass door knobs on the interior and exterior of the church have a quatrefoil design. The door plates have tracery on the top and linen fold panels on the bottom.
7. Mechanical equipment: Five brass crystal chandeliers with Gothic details are in the nave and transept.

D. Site and Surroundings:

In 1972, new church buildings were constructed just north of the church itself and connected to the main building by a brick colonnade with six pointed arches on the street side and four on the landscaped inner courtyard.

Prepared by Sibyl McCormanc Groff
Project Supervisor
Historic American Buildings
Survey
Summer, 1978

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was jointly sponsored by the Historic American Buildings Survey and the City of Baton Rouge, Parish of East Baton Rouge, Department of Public Works, Division of Community Development. Under the auspices of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, and Kenneth Anderson, Principal Architect, the project team was completed in the summer

ST. JAMES EPISCOPAL CHURCH
HABS No. LA-1136 (Page 6)

of 1978 at the HABS field office, Department of Architecture, Louisiana State University. The team was comprised of Sibyl McCormac Groff (Columbia University), project supervisor/historian; Timothy Allanbrook (Rhode Island School of Design), project foreman; architect Kate Johns (Arizona State University); and student architects William J. Graham (University of Maryland), Robert D. Louton (University of Arkansas), and George W. Steinrock, Jr. (University of Detroit).

ADDENDUM TO
SAINT JAMES EPISCOPAL CHURCH
208 North Fourth Street
Baton Rouge
East Baton Rouge Parish
Louisiana

HABS No. LA-1136

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